

Crime Watch: More tips for parents and kids on cyber-bullying

By Carmen Gonzalez Caldwell
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Many of you emailed me regarding last week's article on cyber-bullying, as to what you can do as parents. You can start by talking to your kids about the issue and teaching them the rules below, that will help prevent cyber-bullying from happening to them or someone they know. One of the biggest challenges that parents have nowadays is that this is also happening on your child iPhone/iPad etc. So it's not just the computer anymore that you have to check!

Here's what kids need to know:

- Never give out personal information online, whether in instant message profiles, chat rooms, blogs, or personal websites.
- Never tell anyone but your parents your password — not even friends.
- If someone sends a mean or threatening message, don't respond. Save it or print it out and show it to your parents.
- Never open emails from someone you don't know or from someone you know is a bully.
- Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your classmates to see, even in email.
- Don't send messages when you're angry. Before clicking "send," ask yourself how you would feel if you received the message.
- Help kids who are bullied online by not joining in and showing bullying messages to an adult.

Since most cyber-bullying takes place at home but also on their phones, it's important that parents know about cyber-bullying and that they get involved in preventing it. Just like parents help their kids avoid inappropriate websites, they can protect them from cyber-bullying.

Here's what parents can do:

- Keep your home computer in a busy area of your house. Check your child phone for messages.
- Set up email and chat accounts with your children. Make sure that you know their screen names and passwords and that they don't include any personal information in their online profiles.
- Regularly go over their instant messenger "buddy list" with them. Ask who each person is and how your children know him or her.
- Discuss cyber-bullying with your children and ask if they have ever experienced it or seen it happen to someone.
- Tell your children that you won't blame them if they are cyber-bullied. Emphasize that you won't take away their computer privileges or phone – this is the main reason kids don't tell adults when they are cyber-bullied.

If you would like brochures on cyber-bullying or Internet Safety, please contact our office or email me. You can also contact the National Crime Prevention Council at: www.ncpc.org or Connect with Kids at webservice.connectwithkids.com/welcome-to-webservice, which provided these tips. Both organizations have wonderful resources on the subject.

This issue with Cyber-bullying is leading many children into taking their own life something that can be prevented if we are aware of what is happening. You need to check those computers, their phones or iPads. Be a "nosey" parent. I know it's not easy, but working with schools police, teachers or administrators can help you as a parent as well as your child. Most important is your open communication with your child.